critical digest

505 FIFTH AVENUE. N. Y. 17. N. Y.
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This Week

Damn Yankee-46th St Theatre. 5/5. Brisson-Griffith-Prince present musical comedy based on Douglass Wallop novel with Gwen Verdon, Stephan Douglass, Ray Walston.

Future Dates

Safari-Barbizon Plaza 5/11 ...Once Upon a Tailor-Cort 5/19 Finian's Rainbow-City Center 5/18 Twin Bill-Greenwich Mews-5/26 Seventh Heaven-Anta 5/26...Almost Crazy -Bijou 6/1...King & Duke-Circle 6/5...First Edition-Bijou 7/7.

Tryout Dates

Seventh Heaven-Boston 5/9.

Summer Dates

Arabian Nights- Jones Beach 6/23.

Summer Issues C.D.

Summer issues of C.D. will cover tryouts of new plays as reported in trade journals, daily papers and personal inspection. Plus other features.

Pardon Lateness

This issue of C.D. is late going to press mostly because of editor's move from suburban to NYC living. Sorry. Playgoer's Guide chart will resume next week and will be kept up to date weekly throughout the summer.

Digests of Current Week Theatre Reviews

The Honeys-Longacre- 4/28. Slight majority of daily NY reviewers okayed new farce by Roald Dahl starring Hume Cronyn and Jessica Tandy. Mirror, Post, World Telegram & Sun, and Journal American critics enjoyed antic which detailed how two sister-in-laws did away with their husbands(both husbands played by Cronyn. Coleman, Mirror, noted author mixed ingredients of Springtime for Henry and Arsenic and Old Lace expertly ,and the blend is delightfull. Admirably acted with just the right mixture of credibility and preposterousness, added Watts, Post. Hawkins, WT&S, thought play was more inclined than Arsenic to keep audience constantly tickled. McClain, doubted if comedy would be popular, but recommended it for Dahl fans. Con side summed up by Funke, Times, and Kerr, Herald Tribune ,who didn't think one idea funny enough for a full evening. Former wanted more wacky humor, while latter feared too much orange juice had been stirred into the arsenic.

Inherit the Wind- National 4/21/. Paul Muni won a unanimous salute from NY critics on his return to NY stage, while all critics except Funke, Times, hailed the Lawrence & Lee play based on the Scopes Monkey Trial. Times man, subbing for Atkinson, doubted if even Muni's superb job could cover up for play's lack of tension or its obvious moral. Kerr, Herald Tribune, had reservations on the play itself, but enjoyed the chalk stroke vitality of the evening and the steady fascination of the verbal battle. Though Coleman, Mirror, thought play full of drive, suspense and color, he doubted if it would be a success due to its limited appeal. Billing it as one of the most exciting dramas of the last decade, Chapman, News, praised it for being superbly acted, faultlessly staged and magnificently written. An effective, provocative chronicle drama, listed Watts, Post. Distinghished and challenging summed up Hawkins, WT&S. Muni all the way, reported McClain, Journal American.

Phoenix '55 -Phoenix- 4/23. New revue starring Nancy Walker enjoyed by all NY daily critics except aisle sitters of Post and Journal American. Though they enjoyed Walker though found little else to praise. Heading Pro views, Funke, Times, enjoyed literate adventure in comedy. Kerr, Herald Tribune, found it a fresh, beautifully styled and hilariously funny end-of-the season evening.

NY City Fire Department is considering halting the established practice of detailing firemen to each legit house. Recently men had been assigned to certain off Broadway houses as well as Broadway showshops. Firemen are no longer detailed to baseball parks, fight arenas and racetracks. Cut at theatres is being considered for the fall. Department feels that trained personnel of the theatres can cope with safety problems.

Plays

Champagne Complex closed...Inherit the Wind gives Sunday performances until May 30, then switches to regular Monday to Saturday schedule. Production also has added a second window for ticket buyers...The Day Lincoln Was Shot will be produced by Raymond Massey...Once Upon a Tailor will open May 19 at Cort.

Players

Jack Iams named Drama Editor of NY News, replacing Robert Sylvester who is now turning out his "Dream Street Beat" column 5 times per week...Louis Sheaffer, drama critic of defunct Brooklyn Eagle, has applied for membership in Press Agents Union and will be accepted at next meeting...Jerome Cowan will replace Dennis King in Lunaties and Lovers...Kurt Kasnzar replaced Paul Hartman in Seventh Heaven...Kaye Ballard signed for featured role in Reuben, Reuben ...Constance Collier, age 77, died in NY after a heart attack.

Other Broadways

Hamburg production of Tea and Sympathy received 45 curtain calls on opening night ...Sartre's Vicious Circle rejected for third time in London from playing public performances...Jazz Train, Negro musical with backing by members of US Air Forces in England, drew top notices from London critics...Richard Aldrich named Deputy Director of Foreign Operations Adminstration to Spain.

Summer Playhouses

Oakdale Musical Theatre, Wallingford, Conn, will open June 3 with Guys and Dolls. ...Lambertville Music Circus, NJ, opens June 4 with The Merry Widow

Theatre Vaudeville Notes

"Rhythms and Romance" new revue at Radio City starting May 5 features Eileen Schauler, Warren Galjour, and Tony Starman

Theatre Book Notes

"How Not to Write a Play" by Walter Kerr, Herald Tribune, to be published May 25 by Simon & Schuster..."The Dramatic Works" of Thomas Dekker-Volume II" ,edited by Fredson Bowers, published by Cambridge University Press.

Theatre Film Notes

Monty Wooley will portray the role of Omar in MGM "Kismet"...Reta Shaw will portray her original role in Columbia "Picnic" ...Alec Guinness and Claire Bloom signed by Columbia for "Arms and the Man".

CRITICAL DIGEST- weekly digests NYC show news, reviews, comments from 50 publications. Tickets, critics reports. Covers NY shows, drama books, drama records, theatre on TV. Also west coast theatre briefs. Special summer features. Perfect gift 52 weeks per year for "stage struck" friends, business acquaintances, etc.

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GREEN

ROOM

DEPARTMENT

KINDS OF STARS...Two kinds of stars in theatre ,as defined by Burr,Playbill, are the universal kind whose names are known to all playgoers, and the parochial kind who for various reasons get or demand their names above that of the play in the advertising and on the houseboards. The real stars,he reminds,are those who don't have to fight foolishly for any proof of their status. They already know it,and so does everybody else.

COLUMN TIPS...If Phoenix '55 is a hit,management will install air-conditioning and keep it going allsummer, hears Walker...Cat on a Hot Tin Roof is about "a lot of mixed up Dixieites" Burl Ives informs friends, repeatsFarrell.

OFF BROADWAY SERVICE....The Off Broadway theatre as an institution is no longer a curiosity, explains Atkinson Times. If there is any discernible trend in the local theatre, it is in the direction of Off Broadway producing by actors who have skill and taste and take the theatre seriously. Thieves Carnival, The Three Sisters, The Merchant of Venice and Teach Me How to Cry have all been intelligent and perceptive,and some of them have shown a finer sense of style than Broadway acting.

DRAMA DESK MAIL...The egres behind the box office wicket must scare off a large percentage of customers, notes Wall St. Journal reader... Teahouse of the August Moon has had more than 70 foreign productions, pressagent Sol Jacobson reminds Times Mail Box... NYC is one of the few large cities in the country which does not support a summer theatre program of some type, points out "C.D." reader.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS..."The Dark is Light Enough" is better as a book to read, than as a play to see, believes NBC Leon Pearson...Whatever happened to theory that NY critics gave rave notices only to the young actresses who were beautiful,asks Watts, Post...Inherit the Wind is the year's best play, cheers Chapman,News.

BE AN ANGEL...Can you afford to lose the money is the basic simple fact that a would be angel must ask himself before investing in theatre projects, reminds McClain, Journal American. Truly successful producers have their own select coterie of backers and do not need outsiders,critic adds.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES...Leslie Stevens,author of Bullfight and Champagne Complex, is a new young playwright with the big viewpoint,noted Coleman,Mirror. There are two sides to every question,he told the critic,and in the theatre they are the heavy and the comic. Playwright hopes to continue writing both kinds of plays.

PROS & CONS BY TMK

The Honeys presents a mad idea,superbly acted. Admitting the plot is on the thin side, there is no reason why anyone should take the farce seriously. The cast has much fun presenting the play, the audience will have much fun viewing it. Everybody, but everybody,knows some-one they would like to kill quickly and neatly. This play presents a trio of ideas easily worth the price of admission.

Inherit the Wind is the tribute of the theatre arts to Paul Muni. Too long abroad his return to Broadway is just about perfect. Fact that stage is often over-filled with people and that the play is redundant makes no difference. Muni is one of the great actors of all times. His performance is a must for every theatre fan,student and teacher.

OFF BROADWAY

Safari a new musical revue will be presented at Barbizon Plaza starting May 11 starring Bobby Breen. Alan Abel is the producer and Zeke Berlin is the director. Others in cast include Deede White, Future Fulton, Jannie Williams, Joe Elic and Sam Ulano...First Edition revue due at Bijou July 7 presented by Ray Golden with sketxhes by Danny and Neal Simon.

Chamber Opera Players present Patience May 12-15 at St John's Theatre, 224 Waverly Place...Alhambra Players present My Three Angels May 6 at 15 Second Avenue...Shoestring Revue has announced closing date. News release details that costs ran to over $5000 per week in theatre where top gross was only $6000.

Josh Logan planning a musical show workship, akin to Actors Studio in drama field. Project would help teach professional singers who want to act, and experienced actors who want to sing..

Circle in Square, which re-opens June 5 with King and the Duke, a music al based on sections of "Huckleberry Finn," have recieved City Department okays to reopen...Proscenium Productions will revive Paul Osborn's Mornings at Seven as its next project...Phoenix Theatre will open next season with Aldyth Merris' The Fourth Son...Plans for either extending run of Phoenix '55 revue downtown or moving it uptown are being made.

Heritage Theatre, which will present in English plays on American-Jewish life will present a series of preductions next fall at President Theatre.

Meet the People, revue which closed at Cafe Theatre, suing Louis Kay Restaurant Enterprises for mismanagement of cabaret function of their recent project.

THEATRE BOOK COMMENTS

"Laurette", Marguerite Courtney's biography of her mother Laurette Taylor (Rinehart) was recommended by three reviewers . Coleman, Mirror, billed it as a frank and fascinating biography that you can't put down once you start reading it. Nichols, Times, listed it as one of the most amazingly detached studies printed in a long time, a fascinating performance. Down, Variety, added that book is a rarity in show business, a really good biography of a great star. Book is a brillant job, he okayed, holding up a mirror to the sunshine and shadow of a star crossed life.

"Bottoms Up" by Cornelia Otis Skinner (Dodd, Mead) is a book of fresh and hilariously saucy essays about theatre and other subjects, notes Ranson, Variety.

"The Lion of the West" by James Kirke Paulding (Stanford University) is an attractive printing of America's most famous "lost" play, approves Down, Variety.

THEATRE OUT OF TOWN

The Dark is Light Enough continues in Boston...Tea and Sympathy, The King and I, The Rainmaker and The Tender Trap playing in Chicago....The Pajama Game has traveled to Des Moines....Anniversary Waltz, Dear Charles, and The Caine Mutiny Court Martial playing in Los Angeles...Guys and Dolls traveled up to Montreal...Once Upon a Tailor due to Open in Philadelphia, Seventh Heaven continuing there ....Seven Year Itch now in Richmond...Kismet played Rochester...Solid Gold Cadillac in St. Louis....Oh Men, Oh Women , and The Teahouse of the August Moon in SanFrancisco.